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The CIA: secrecy and books

By Randy Keith

The CIA's secrecy oath may not provide enough basis for the agency to prosecute former employees who publish books exposing agency personnel and operations, according to the agency's public affairs director, Herbert Hetu.

"That's one of the things we're trying to test right now, particularly for instance in the Schnepp case," Hetu said in an interview yesterday.

Every person hired by the agency must sign an oath of secrecy including a section specifying that all employees and former employees must agree to show all material to be published to the CIA before publication.

Hetu contends that Schnepp violated this oath when he published his book, "A Decent Interval," which detailed the CIA's actions as Saigon fell in 1975.

Hetu said that Schnepp had agreed "to meet with Adm. Turner (the CIA director) before the book was even finished, and promised in the company of witnesses that he would submit the book."

Schnepp never submitted the book. Its publication was secret until it was released last fall.

Hetu said that whether the oath could be considered a contract has "never been tested in court," and added, "it's a matter of honor. There's some sort of personal moral obligations, you either have personal integrity or you don't."

He said the U.S. Justice Department has not decided whether to



—Daily photo by John Pomfret

Central Intelligence Agency Director Stansfield Turner was on campus yesterday and took a whirlwind tour trailed by reporters and Secret Service agents. Later, Turner gave a speech in Kresge while some 25 students demonstrated outside, protesting CIA activities at home and abroad.

prosecute Schnepp.

Hetu also said the CIA has placed great emphasis on anti-terrorist intelligence gathering in the last few years, and said despite the rise in terrorist action, the CIA has been "very effective."

"I can't tell you about our successes," he said. "We've been very successful on a number of occasions in thwarting terrorist activity. The problem is that I can't tell you where and when and how because foreign agents' covers would be blown."

"Our mission is to find out what is going on and then nip it in the bud before it happens," Hetu added.

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